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MARGARET ETHEL MACDONALD

1870 — 1911













**Margaret Ethel MacDonald**

1870      1911

**" Fear to be unworthy of the dead "**

**3, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London  
Lossiemouth**

**1911**



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# Margaret Ethel MacDonald

## I

To write of a radiant life that has been suddenly shrouded in darkness is a comforting piece of work to him who stands at that gate where the mortal parts with the immortal; but to give the writing to the world—if only to friends—is generally naught but a sorry mistake. For how can the words be weighed? How can violence be smoothed out from the sorrow? How can the emotions be so veiled that it is not sacrilege for the eyes of the world to see them? And, on the other hand, how can tearful affection tell of those lovable weaknesses which made the dead one human, and thus enabled men to understand her goodness? The general effect of such tributes is that of a too sunny landscape, drenched too suddenly in too heavy rain.

But I write knowing the danger and facing the

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failure. For it was her wish, and it was in this wise.

When it was evident that Death had conquered, we opened the door that had been shut against him, and in his presence talked of many things.

We recalled the day, fifteen years before, when I went to her home and she came in to greet me beaming as the sun, clothed in some shot material that shone as though it were golden armour tinged with ruby. We walked again over Dartmoor on our honeymoon trip. We turned aside to look at the homes of vanished peoples; we climbed the ridges; we dived into the hollows. The night fell and our destination was far off apparently. Its lights twinkled in the darkness away below us. But we were mistaken, and we got there much sooner than we expected. "You said," she smiled, "that it was like life. Its distances were deceiving." And I bowed my head.

Then she talked of our work. She knew every thorn that lay on the way. She had experienced the struggle. "It is so selfish of me to go," she said; "you will be alone. But if, when I go, I may plead to be allowed to be with you, I shall do that, and if in the silences of the night or of the hills you get consolation, say to yourself that it is I being with you." And then she said: "I

## **“Write’ Something”**

**will tell you what you might do. Write something about me before the veil of Time is drawn round me and you do not see me so well as you do now. The writing will help you, and perhaps you will turn to it sometimes and find me dwelling in it.”**

**I said I would. And so I am writing.**

## II

THE events of a life are but its scaffolding, hiding, whilst it supports, the structure of being behind it. The biography of my wife is soon told.

Born at 17, Pembridge Square, London, on the 20th of July, 1870, she lived only to reach the climax of youth and died at 3, Lincoln's Inn Fields on the 8th of September, 1911. Her mother died when she was but three weeks old, and her father, one of the kindest and courtliest of men, gave her freedom to act and think as her mind desired, and to the end never chided or blamed her for following truth as she saw it. From him she received an inheritance of moral directness, an ability to look at things as they are, a rare faculty of belief in the verities, and an incapacity to elevate an excuse into a justification. She never struggled with her reason to attain to these virtues; they were axioms of her soul. The household at Pembridge Square belonged to a type now vanishing, where wealth, intellectual distinction and liberality of thought

## Her Work

mingled together, and humility reigned over all.

When I was just beginning to move out of the humbler ranks of the Labour movement, and was candidate for Southampton in 1895, I was lying ill in St. Thomas's Hospital. One day a letter enclosing a subscription to my election fund came there with very kindly words accompanying it. The signature was "M. E. Gladstone." Thus our companionship began. She told me the other day that some treasured scraps of poor paper hold in keeping the emotions of the months that followed, and on a grey November day in 1896 a gracious soul which beamed from a happy face looking younger than the years it had seen, came to meet me, not to leave me again till we bade each other adieu in the presence of Death.

How hard and lifeless is a catalogue of the many things she did. Beginning with Sunday School and boys' club teaching, advancing to Charity Organisation visiting, secretaryships of District Nursing Associations, and finally membership of Socialist bodies, she groped her way from the human pity which was her inheritance to the reforming faith which was her conquest.

Inquiries into social conditions; deputations of persuasion innumerable; sweating exhibitions; chairmanships and secretaryships and memberships

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of executives ; agitations regarding truck, laundry hours and conditions, barmaids, shop assistants, children in every aspect of neglect and sacrifice, home work, technical education for women, unemployed women, girls' clubs, women's suffrage; the Charity Organisation Society, the Women's Industrial Council the National Union of Women Workers, Distress Committees, and, to crown all as she always insisted, the Women's Labour League—these were but the means through which her untiring and aspiring spirit sought to bring justice, beauty and happiness into the hearts of the common people.

Day by day, she attended her committees, she planned their programmes, she did their work. Always full but never overwhelmed, she went on cheerily, neglecting no detail, overlooking no essential, full of suggestive resource, willing to take up any burden, advising, acting.

The end was like the rest. On Thursday, the 20th of July, she went to Leicester with a member of the Home Office Committee appointed to investigate the management of Industrial Schools; on the morning of Friday she attended a meeting of an Anglo-American Friendship Committee; a little after noon she joined me at the House of Commons to lunch with one whom she had desired

## The End

to meet ever since she read his pathetic book on the negro, Professor Du Bois; that afternoon we went to the country for a week-end rest. She complained of being stiff, and jokingly showed me the finger carrying her marriage and engagement rings. It was badly swollen and discoloured, and I expressed concern. She laughed away my fears: "It is only protesting against its burdens!" On Saturday she was so stiff that she could not do her hair, and she was greatly amused by my attempts to help her. On Sunday she had to admit that she was ill and we returned to town. Then she took to bed.

For six weeks and a half she lay never murmuring, always hoping, never asking about herself, sorry when, in the earlier days of her illness, she saw a friend and feared she had not been cheery enough. When, on the day before her death, she asked to be told what a specialist said and was told, for then all hope had gone and Death had already touched her, not a murmur crossed her lips, not a tear rose to her eyes. She smiled sadly and asked: "How long?" Then she bade her children and friends farewell, strengthened us all by telling us that if she had her life to live over again she would choose the same part, assured us she required no preparation for she had always been prepared, offered up



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thanks to God for His manifold mercies in giving her her friends and her work, talked of those who had gone before her, and fell asleep.









### III

ONE of the common delusions about public persons is that they like to be in the garish light of son-of-a-bitch stage or other. So far as we were concerned we accepted this as our doom, but never welcomed it as our delight. On those long Parliamentary days when we hardly saw each other, and when she used to come down to lunch, or tea, or dinner, that we might just be together, how often, half banteringly but half seriously, we talked with pleasurable expectation of a time when I should so offend my constituency that it would reject me. Then, we were to go away together and watch our children grow, and strive, and, God willing, attain. When it became inevitable that I had to accept the Chairmanship of the Party in Parliament, and when we had finally agreed to it together, tears rolled down her cheeks and she said: "We are the martyrs of life. There will be more publicity, more attacks, more claims upon you," and then wiping away the tears, she smiled, "But we are

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doing the work of our destiny, and how silly it is of me to seem to weary of the labour. I am not really weary ; but it is heavy." Recently a vulgar attack upon her, which appeared in a certain weekly journal in an article on Labour Members' wives, gave her much pain for a moment or two, but her cheeriness came back at once and she said : " Never mind ! They do not know us." I was always under the impression that this was a side of her life which few suspected, but the letters which have been sent to me since her death show me I was wrong. She apparently could not hide it, though her shyness in everything that belonged to the affections made her do her best to live her personal life in secret with doors closed and candles lit.

But it was that personal life which was the source of the public life, and the active member of many committees must remain nothing more than an industrious and capable person, decided in her views but of a humble spirit, to all who knew nothing of the wife and companion.

It was in the long evenings when I was not away that we lived. When our home was wrapt in silence and little heads were all dreaming on pillows, the lamps were lit—she always loved the soft yellow light of lamps : that seemed to please

## Home Life

her mind—the world shut out, some book was taken down and I read whilst she sat darning or sewing. In this way we read through J. Addington Symonds' "Renaissance in Italy," the best of Scott, Dickens, Thackeray and Carlyle; Browning, Tennyson, Wordsworth were reserved for Sunday, when she would not listen to the books that we were reading during the week. As I write this, there lie by me Francke's "Social Forces in German Literature," a book-mark half-way through it showing at its edges, and Browning's "Ring and the Book," also marked about three parts through. They will never be finished now. With them it is as with other things: the plough has been left in the middle of the furrow.

In response to this side of her life, as much as from a desire to see the world and broaden our outlook and knowledge, we undertook our long journeys abroad. Latterly, as our public life became more prominent, these journeys also served other purposes. But they were begun so that we might be alone and away from the things which were always pressing for admission into our lives and separating us. On the sea we were together with our personal interests, we rejoiced that nobody could reach us, we dreaded the appearance of friends on board our ship.



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Our first visit to the United States and Canada in 1897, was like a honeymoon trip. Everything was strange. We revelled like children. Rat Portage, the Rainy River, the Lake in the Woods ; Chicago, Boston and New York ; what memories of hearty enjoyment, not so much of them but of our own company, do they now bring to me ! In her childish happiness she whimsically began a novel on the railway in Canada, using interleaved time tables as her manuscript. She would never show it to me because she was "still learning the proper phrases of love, and had not got them good enough." Then in 1902 came South Africa, when we were still more alone with each other, in the silence and desolation of the war ; again, in 1906, the long voyage round the world ; finally, the visit to India in 1909, broken short by an election when we had reached the part where we hoped to be most alone, and replanned in consequence for this year, but again broken off never to be undertaken.

On these journeyings we found many friends and received much hospitality and kindness, but these friends will not misunderstand or be aggrieved when I say that we enjoyed one another most of all. Our thoughts were free and she lived in that world of quiet happiness of a personal kind which at home was like a treasured property rarely

## Chesham Bois

enjoyed, a domain of rest possessed but scarcely used.

It was this hungering and thirsting after domestic privacy and quiet that made her long for family week-ends in the country, and when we found that it was our destiny to be drawn into the maelstrom of public life and that London was to give us no peace, we chose a little house on a spur of the Chilterns for our retreat. There were commons and woods and field-paths near, there were historic shrines and old churches and hospitable inns all round. In hot summer days we strolled amongst shady trees; when the ground was hard in winter, when the hedges were bursting into green in spring, when the woods were golden and shedding their leaves in autumn, we tramped mile upon mile, revelling in each other's companionship, discussing many projects which remote leisure might enable us to carry out, and singing praises in our hearts to the Providence who decreed that our paths through life were to meet and merge. She enjoyed this so much that when we were not there ourselves she always tried to get someone to use our house, lest happily the peace and joy it gave to us might fall on them too.

We were too good companions to tolerate with a honeyed dishonesty what we considered shortcomings in the other. I come of a people who

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were as ready to use their dirks as their tongues, she was absolutely incapable of covering up disagreement by politeness, and if she had an opinion she always declined to say nothing about it. And so clouds sometimes scudded across our sky, but they hurried from horizon to horizon as though ashamed of their shadows. She never yielded unless she thought she was in error, and she would return again and again to points of difference. One thing she could never do; she could never rest quiet or be silent if she thought anything was wrong. Twice in her life—once in the Law Courts and once in a society to which she belonged—she underwent great trouble because she felt it was her duty to speak out. That was the magnificence of her moral courage. It never thought of consequences. When she was most provoking in these long walks she was most splendid.

The Buckingham woods are now yellowing, the blackberries are spotting the hedges, but she whom they called to come out for happy hours in lane and field-path is dead to their allurements, and her yearning for domestic peace is soothed by eternal rest. Some of her obituary notices, I observe, speak of her political ambitions. How little we know, and how much we chatter thoughtlessly, about each other!

## IV

At this point of my writing my mind turns to our home itself, to the mother and the children. Of her calm tenderness there I cannot venture to write. But in her ways as a mother she was so unlike what is conventional, that I try to put down what I hope may be an illuminating sentence or two about them. She regarded her children as individuals whose personalities were yet hidden in youth as the budding flower is hidden in spring. She was afraid to do violence to that personality. She tried to surround it with warmth and light and the nourishment of her own example as a faithful working and believing woman, so that its own true self might grow up in grace and strength. From their very birth she consequently taught her children to amuse themselves. She drove them back upon their own being, to find companionship and resource there. They lay, or crawled, on the floor for hours by her side, whilst she wrote or read, giving them now and again an encouraging nod or

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smile or word. I can see her now in these morning days sitting at the black table, a little bundle lying at her side, from which legs and arms waved and a gurgle of joy came, with the sun pouring in upon them through the tall open windows.

When they began to move about they were taught responsibility and independence. She seemed to say: "I am at hand to hold and to help *if that be necessary*, but I want you to develop your own little selves, so that you will become men and women and not creatures of circumstance." Her work was spiritual. It was to provide an atmosphere for them to breathe, a memory for them to cherish, an ideal for them to seek. Her happy optimism enabled her to carry this hard programme through. "It would be so easy to spoil them," she used to say, "and regret would only come after some years." She believed in discipline, but it was not the discipline which is a bowing to outward force, it was the reasoned orderliness of conduct ruling the emotional uncertainty of passion and appetite.

When we went to India she was very unhappy at having to leave them—unhappier than I ever knew her. They were growing up and she liked to have them about her. Besides, one always seems to know when Death is coming. But she

## Mother and Children

concluded it would really be best for them. She was always anxious that they should feel their separate individuality in their unity with us. Then there was Lossiemouth where they were to be left, with its sea, and moors, and woods, and encompassing hills, and weather-beaten fishermen; and she wished that that too should enter into their being and enrich both their bodies and their minds. So she went away, her heart and her head for once at variance with each other.

This view of a mother's duty was only an aspect of the profound reverence she held for human beings. Even the child has its rights which the parent must respect. The motherly love of the penguin which smothers the infant in its caresses was not hers. She saw that mistaken love illustrated in many a home which was a model in the eyes of a blind world. Mediocrity in manhood, failure of the direst kind, she believed was its product. And so she approached her own little ones as treasures given to her to guard and protect, not to twist and mould into a mere image of herself. She was guided by the idea that it was the duty of the parent to enrich the inherited personality of the child. "Oh," she said on that last sad day, "put romance into the lives of the children. Try and get them to know the things of the spirit, so

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that they may truly love and nobly work." Her ideal of a mother was she who was the dearest of the friends of her children—dearest because they had no secrets from her, and because they knew that they owed it to her that they had grown up in the fullness of the power of their manhood.

In this respect, she was a Roman. The world was a battle-field to her; her sons and daughters were to go out and take a sturdy part in the strife. She hoped that when the time came for them to leave her fireside and depart on their own ways, they could stand manfully erect, honest eyed and clean souled to receive her farewell and her blessing.

## V

SHE once said jokingly that she lived on blue-books, and that one of the privileges of being a wife of a Member of Parliament was that blue-books could be had for nothing delivered at one's own door.

What she meant was she was interested in reality. That perhaps was an inheritance. A relative of hers once said that she came of a long line of D.D.'s, LL.D.'s, and F.R.S.'s; and that was the source, perhaps, of her idealist practicality. She had no confidence in and no respect for the mere sentimentalist, the person who talked in generalities, who gushed from the heart. "In the day of trial," she used to say, "he will either fail you or desert you because he has never tested himself. He is not a soldier, he is a brawler." "Do not live by the excitement which comes from the waving of flags, for that wears itself out; live by the confidence which comes of knowledge, for that gathers in strength with the years."



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And so all her work and her faith were based upon investigation. During the years when she worked with the Women's Industrial Council, her one thought was how to find out the truth about industrial conditions. First of all in companionship with one who like herself was cut off long before the due time, and whose memory she cherished till the last, Mrs. Hogg, and latterly with others, she carried out investigation after investigation, the ripened fruits of which are not yet gathered. No drudgery was too great or unpleasant for her. In all weathers she trudged up and down mean streets winning the confidence of the people whom she visited, attaching many of them to her by countless untold acts of pity and help, going out when the world was sleeping to see the women unprotected by factory legislation labouring in the dead hours of the night, entering public houses so that she might come into touch with something of the life both before and behind the bars, searching along labyrinthine stairs and passages for someone who she had heard was in distress. Thus, although she never knew what it was to miss a comfort, she acquired a knowledge of that other world of poverty and privation which was not only accurate as to facts but just as to opinions.

The results have been published in innumerable

## Her Spirit

reports, articles, comments, embodied in books like "Women in the Printing Trades," and in magazines like the old "Women's Industrial News." Moreover, somewhere in the archives of the Home Office there lie scores upon scores of letters written by her or upon her initiative, relating to Factory Acts and administrative orders both in their present working and future reform. Most of this was done in the same way as she gave her charities—without any thought of its ever being known. Credit was the last reward she troubled about. She often used the simile of the sower of good seed going forth rejoicing in the springtime, energised and gladdened like the earth itself by the renewal of the promise of growth and harvest. It is the fate of every servant of the masses to have hard burdens put unnecessarily upon his shoulders and to have little thanks accorded to him when he has done his work. That did trouble her sometimes, but she was not long in returning to her haven of comfort by reflecting: "Well, never mind. We must work for the reward of our own approval not that of other people." I have known not a few people soured and silenced by ingratitude, but she held to a philosophy which was an antidote to that. "The best praise is that which the soul whispers to the intellect, not that

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which the crowd shouts to the ear." She was like one living above the calms and the storms which affect the minds of men.

It was a great comfort to have her approval of difficult and delicate action, because her grip upon reality was so firm. She saw life placidly and without crookedness. You always knew where to find her. She was not like a brawling stream, dry in summer and flooded in winter. She was like a spring, the source of which lay far below those surfaces that are sodden one season and parched the next. She was unmoved by stormy enthusiasms and was not discouraged by the reactions which followed them. She was as steady as the Pole Star. Once when a conference which she was attending was swayed by an impassioned speech she turned to me wearily and said: "I am so tired. The dust gets into my eyes and mouth and it is difficult to go on. It seems as though a motor car had passed us--to crash into the ditch at the next turning. And the children are hurrahing."

Her mind was precise and well ordered. Though she had scores of engagements, some of them made weeks and weeks ahead, she kept no engagement book. Her appointments marshalled themselves at call like a docile and well-drilled troop. Names—even foreign and unfamiliar ones—and addresses

## Her Idealism

rarely eluded her. Her memory did not require any assistance from an outward ordering and arranging of papers. She could put her hand upon what she wanted in a mass of confusion.

But the D.D. inheritance was also there. For, no one ever set the work of the day more firmly in the ideal and the purpose of the morrow, no one regarded Time as a moment of Eternity, more than she did. "However long Time may be, it is only a very short part of Eternity," she said consoling an aunt on the approaching death of a sister. If she carried out the advice, "to live easily and cheerful, and crowd one good action so close to another that there may not be the least empty space between them," she did it not with an eye upon the action alone but upon the conception of right and wrong—upon the completed plan—which made the action worthy. She did not write or theorise about philosophies regarding time and substance; she lived them.

And so to turn to her in stress and storm was like going into a sheltered haven where the waters were at rest and smiling up in the face of heaven. Weary and worn, buffeted and discouraged, thinking of giving up the thankless strife and of retiring to books and my own children and household shrines, I would flee with her to our Buckingham

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home and my lady would heal and sooth me with her cheery faith and steady conviction, and send me forth again to smite and be smitten. No one, not even I, can ever tell with accuracy how much of what steadiness there is in the Labour Movement in this country is due to her.

## VI

**PERHAPS** if I explain her attitude to the "Women's Movement" I can show with greater clearness how firm was her grasp on the whole of life and how she never lost sight of that wholeness.

She wanted the suffrage. If it was proper for her to ask a man to vote for a candidate, she could not fathom the mystery of the reason which forbade her to vote herself. She took her little daughter to walk in the first great franchise demonstration, so keen was she for enfranchisement; and the badge she wore that day was carefully laid past as a treasure which she hoped the little girl would value in due time. But by-and-by she felt that the clamour which was being raised was only narrowing and making shallow the movement towards the elevation of women in the family and the State, and she then declined to take an active part in the agitation. In particular she had no sympathy with what she called the selfish middle and upper class view that everything should be brought to a standstill till the vote was gained.

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The vote was a badge, a very precious badge, but when she was told that it was to raise wages, take women off the streets, make womanhood sacred, she scorned the claim; when she was told that until it was pinned on the breast of woman, factory legislation would have to be stayed, no democratic progress—like payment of Members of Parliament—would have to be made, and women would have to continue to adorn public houses, she ranged herself definitely in opposition. "A far greater insult is offered to me," she said, "when I see advertisements in newspapers asking for pretty girls to serve behind bars so as to attract customers, than that which meets me when I am told that I must pay taxes but am not intelligent enough to vote at Parliamentary elections." "I know how little the vote misused has done for men," she would argue. "Life is too short to waste on the forging of weapons alone. I must do what I can, and use every means I can, to make the real changes." When in the younger days of the Women's Labour League there was some danger of a split owing to conflicting views about the suffrage, she worked with might and main to keep the League united, believing that the League with its full programme of reform was far more precious for women than any pronouncement it might make

## Women

upon, or action it might take regarding, the suffrage.

But she was always sorry that she could not be more active in this movement, and steadily declined to join any of the organisations started either to hamper it or to amplify it on its merely political side. Not long before she died, she went to lunch with a relative, and there unexpectedly met some of the more militant leaders. She came home very happy, and talked a great deal to me about the meeting. She was afraid they might disagree, and her heart was so much with them that that would have pained her greatly.

The woman question was always a very big and a very deep one to her. She regarded womanhood as something elusive which dwelt in a Holy Place where one approached silently and with adoring awe. Therefore the home was to her a temple, with places where only the Levites were to enter. She always confessed that in this respect she was old-fashioned, but maintained that the new fashion was error. This feeling was so strong in her and so pervaded her being that dining-out, as Society means it, was most distasteful to her. Her meals were of the nature of sacrificial feasts, and to have them with people whom she did not know, and for whom she had no regard, was repulsive. She felt this so keenly that I think she showed it, and from



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within a year or two after our marriage we were not troubled by many invitations which we could not accept. She used to say after some of these functions: "Now, won't that do for the next six months?" Besides, she abhorred women in very smart evening dress. "They talk of the clothes of working women," she said. "Working women show at least some honour for their bodies." Womanhood in all its aspects and expressions (and it was not complete without them all—maternity and beauty, liberty and sacrifice, love and reticence) held this sacred place in her mind. She never allowed even her closest companion to forget that. She fondled womanhood as though it were a tender flower glistening with dewdrops; she approached it as the pure novice approaches a Madonna.

To call her "strait-laced" is to miss the quality of her feeling. Womanhood was a specially precious revelation of the mind and will of God to her. She was for ever deriving strength and purity from touching the hem of its garment with her lips. She therefore could tolerate nothing either in thought or in word making it common or unclean. Her yearnings for life, for consolation, for hope, for blessings, seemed to embody themselves in maternity with a heart of pity and purity, of love and expectation.

## Men and Women

But she was the very opposite of self-righteous. She came to me one day and said with beaming face : " Lady—— tells me that you have backed the Public Morality Bill ? " I laughed, and replied : " There are two MacDonalds in the House," and she said nothing more. Next day she came meeting me at the door when I returned late at night and greeted me : " You *did* back the Bill. I got a copy to see. Bless you." And on the day of her death she said . " When I read your speech trying to get the poor deserted and betrayed women fully included in the Insurance Bill, I wept. Bless you for that."

Moreover just as maternity embodied to her all the love, the pathos, and the purity of womanhood, so she could never think of any woman's movement apart from a man's movement. Manhood and womanhood were quite distinct revelations to her, and she never regarded even with toleration those women who appeared to follow upon manly paths. Nor could she bear the anti-man woman. I used to laugh at her for using so frequently the phrase " women working side by side with the men," but she was wont to reply : " How can I put my belief more simply ? I believe in men ; I believe in women ; I believe that their nature and outlook on life should be distinct, and that the one should not

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imitate the other. But I believe they should co-operate in the work of the world." Watts's picture "Love and Life" expressed the human movement to her, and that was in her mind during all her activities.

## VII

It was with a deep purpose arising from her views of woman and the home that she started the Women's Labour League in 1906. True, the immediate object of the League was to help the Labour Party, but when she discussed it with me before the work was begun, she always put other purposes first. "If I did not share your ideals, how wretched would our life be!" she often said; "and if I accepted your absorption in public work simply because it was making you a public person, what a drag would that vanity be upon both of us!" Her project met with opposition and coldness in several influential quarters, but she had made up her mind that her full purpose could be carried out in no other way, and nothing under such circumstances daunted her. What was her purpose?

She had seen the husband working in the wide educative field of public service drifting away from the wife walled in within a stifling sphere as though she were in purdah, and she grieved at the consequences. She became full of the conviction

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that something had to be done to bring women out of their prisons and give them a place in our movement. And after much thought and consultation with me she came to the conclusion that that could only be done if women were made responsible for some work of their own. Trade Unions admitted women, the Independent Labour Party enrolled them as members. But she thought that was not enough. Women's duties made it impossible for many of them to attend the meetings called at times most convenient for men ; women's training made it equally impossible for them to give their best and their most to work which was controlled and conducted by men. So she founded the Women's Labour League in the same spirit as the pure knight rode out to free damsels cursed under evil spells. Through it she was to supply him who toiled in the Labour movement with a wife who helped him in all his doings, who understood him, who was not misled by false ideals ; she was to build up Labour homes on the solid foundation of mutual sympathy, of common counsel, of hand in hand effort ; she was to lead out women on to the open field where the tilling and the sowing were being done to hymns of faith, and reveal to them the joy of those who were labouring there and enable them to share in it. Her conviction was that it was only when the woman

## The Women's Labour League

knows life in all its fullness of aspiration that she can turn inwards to her home with a heart full of affection for her husband and children. Then, they are not merely her mate and her offspring. They are the creatures of tragic fate and heroic endeavour. A great pity and a great love endear them to her. Only when the home is shadowed by the clouds, and cheered by the sun of the outside world does it become that haven of rest and garden of healing which she thought it ought to be.

For that, and nothing meager than that, the Women's Labour League, the best-beloved of the offspring of her thought and labour, was to stand. How shadowed have been its opening chapters! If the great things of life awaken with a dirge and grow through sorrow to triumph, the Women's Labour League has begun well. That wonderful woman, its secretary, Mary Middleton, whose saintliness bloomed like a rare flower in a village garden and was unknown beyond a small community, died this summer, and my wife passed after her ere the autumn was out. But if any influence can cross the border between Life and Death, theirs is now guarding and cherishing the stricken nursling which they with a handful of other devoted women, coaxed into life, and led affectionately into the world.

## VIII

I HAVE said that she never enjoyed formal hospitality because a meal was to her a sacrificial feast. That was the secret of her own hospitality. It was never formal. It was never an affair of the table but of the affections. She had a great capacity for making friends, and an equally great capacity for detecting qualities which made friendship impossible. And in making these friends her intuitions were never baffled and misled by outward circumstances. She would go investigating, say, sweating, and would return with the remark: "I met such a nice woman to-day. Let us keep in touch with her." As the years went on and we journeyed hither and thither, our friendships extended round the world, and a constant stream of people of all nationalities, races, and colours came to our table and fireside. A greater stream of correspondence addressed to all sorts of people from the humblest working woman, to the most in-

## The Open House

fluential public man, poured through our letter-box week by week to all parts of the world.

In those happy days of the summer of 1896, when we dreamt our dreams and fondled many projects, she cherished the idea of making our house a home for friends; and when the house was opened and we came to dwell in it together, nothing pleased her better than to have friends around her. She could not live to herself alone. Before the absorption of Parliamentary life—so blighting to wide personal intercourse of an intimate kind—we had evenings when our rooms were crowded with friends. These gatherings have been called “political salons.” They were that, but much more. She regarded Socialism as a religion binding its converts, not like a political association, but like a Church. And these were meetings of the elect, and of those working with the elect in the mission of the elect. The nervous novice from the country was as welcome as the famed leader, and she moved amongst them, radiantly happy to have them with her. Like a mother gathering her brood under her wing, she revelled in bidding her friends come and be happy with her under her roof. Latterly the “at homes” became a kind of international meeting ground where those working with us in every part of the world came and met each other. But the



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gatherings never lost their personal and family feeling, and she did not like to have them unless she knew I could be there. That is why they stopped when Parliament demanded my evenings, and why in spite of many requests she never revived them. She was afraid they would become nothing but political salons, and that those who came might begin to regard her as a mere political manager.

One little incident may be told, not only to show what purpose she meant the gatherings to serve, but what was their effect. One day an obscure Member of a Colonial Parliament came to us with an introduction. He was ill and lonely. "Let us have some friends to meet you," she suggested. The poor man gasped that he was nobody. "But my husband and I in most people's eyes are worse than 'nobodies,'" she said, and the invitations were issued. The years went by and our guest of that evening became Premier of his State. Later on, we wandered into his Dominion, when he lavished regal hospitality upon us and could not cease from speaking of the little kindness which we had shown to him, and which had touched him so that he never ceased to be grateful for it. One of his Ministers laughingly said that they had often heard about it in Cabinet meetings.

Her hospitality was but an expression of the joy

## Her Social Spirit

she had in her kind. She loved to be with co-workers, to talk and discuss with them, to listen to them talk and discuss, to feel unity of spirit with them. The happiness which comes to children when they join hands together in play never ceased to move in her. She was always playing "Here we go round the mulberry bush," or something of that kind, in her quiet sedate way.

That is why she used to boast that she was a "town bird." Often and often was she asked if she too did not come from Scotland. "No," she used to reply with bantering gaiety, "I come from Bayswater; I am a Cockney, and get my inspiration from paved streets, not from heathery hills." Humanity inspired her. She "cuddled" up to it, as it were, to hear its heart beat and feel its warmth, and she loved it best in its simplicity, in its humility, in its naturalness.

This, too, was the nature of her Socialism. Socialism to her was no wrathful resentment of class. It was a dream of the City of God wrapt in peace, with its open gates rising up on the horizon. The atmosphere of her early home was one of human kindness, but when she was brought into contact with the ugly and unjust world whilst working for the Charity Organisation Society, and whilst honorary secretary to the Hoxton District Nursing Association

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she came to see that great changes had to be made. But she always thought of them as changes of personal as well as of social relationship, changes which would make the hearts of men beat more in unison, and her unshakable democratic sympathies made her see that these changes could come neither from "above" nor "below," but from the common heart of Society, from that moral creative impulse which in her own case had eliminated all class feeling and which made her at home just as much with the poor as with the wealthy—with the wealthy as with the poor. I have known her, dressed to go to some evening dinner or function, receive some poor woman who had called, on terms of easy equality, talk to her about her business, and within half-an-hour appear in exactly the same frame of mind in a company gorgeous and resplendent in all the trappings of wealth and social distinction. Sometimes she discussed the fears and doubts which some of our companions expressed about our "countenancing the world." She would reply: "I countenance the dress and the dinners of my rich friends in the same way as I countenance the rags and the tea of my poor friends. I am sorry for both and I want to change both."

She was perhaps a little too indifferent to dress. It was supposed that she made it a principle not to

## Dress

dress better than the wife of a workman. The thought never entered her head. She would have regarded that to be pandering, and if she had ever thought of a standard at all it would have been one of her own. She had a blind eye for externals of all kinds. Never did mediæval saint or primitive habits pay less attention to the flesh and its decoration than she did. It is told of her that when about to take a leading part in some important deputation, friends insisted upon her buying a new blouse. When she appeared and rose to address the powers who were to be persuaded to do righteously, it was noticed, to the horror of those friends, that the new garment had been put on with its back to the front. I could tell ever more grievous tales than that. She grudged every moment taken from what she considered to be the real work of life. I once heard a gentleman at a dinner table remark to her that it was the duty of a lady to look pretty, and I listened with curiosity for her reply. She had sometimes an awkward way of snapping people up. But she said, as though she accepted his wisdom and only wished to supplement it : " And it is the duty of a man to train his mind so that he knows what prettiness is." Besides, looking as she did so steadily upon the world through the eyes of the mother, the mind of maternity constantly guided her. Now, maternity

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is always portrayed in sober garments. That is of the fitness of things. No artist ever pictured or ever can picture maternity in gaudy raiment.

But I began this section trying to explain her conception of hospitality and her notion of an open house. They were summed up in this: Friends! Friends! Friends! They were the cravings of maternity stretching its arms beyond the home to embrace its children.

## IX

WHEN she was a girl she taught in a Sunday School, and one of the letters she has kept was sent to the curate in charge of the School, telling him how impossible it had become for her to teach phrases without putting a living meaning into them. She wanted to tell her boys of their Christian duty, but knew that that would not be allowed, so she resigned her class. She wrote, "I felt a hypocrite to be teaching them Christ's words and not telling them what the words seemed to me to mean. Indeed, I should feel a hypocrite whatever I taught them so long as I came from the midst of every blessing and comfort and knew that they in their different ways had somewhat the same, whilst close to us are those Christ told us are our brothers and sisters in want of the love and care and attention which we could give them." That was in 1889. On that hard road she continued to walk. When she was fifteen, one of her aunts tells me she was discussing with them what her

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womanhood was to be. "I want to try and live the Sermon on the Mount," she said. "She was very very beautiful then," adds her aunt. Many of us have said that at fifteen, but how few of us whose way has lain through public places as hers did, could say as she did at forty-one: "I have done nothing since my girlhood from purely selfish motives, and I am not afraid to be judged."

She worshipped all her days. Every part of creation was to her a joy before which she bowed in thankfulness—an unfulfilled joy of the perfection of which she had visions. The woods and fields changing their beauty with the seasons; London with its confusion of peace and noise, of indulgence and sacrifice, of luxury and poverty; Lossiemouth, with its sunny sea and expansive sky, with its seafaring hardships and its holiday delights; men and women with their love and sorrow, their hope and brokenness of heart, their strength and their weakness; Magdalene, Rachael, Mary—all touched her soul. She did not merely meet them on her threshold and greet them each in its appropriate way; she bade them enter in to sup with her, and she communed with them and got from each its message from the Eternal.

She once heard that a certain lady, a friend of the family, had stated that we had no business to

## Her Faith

employ on a certain mournful occasion Christian rites, because we did not go regularly to church and carry out all the formulæ of church membership. "I never doubt Christianity," she remarked, "except when I hear such views. Will these people never understand Christ?" She certainly did. Daily she sat at his communion table, daily she partook of the sacrificed body and the spilt blood. Awe and veneration for Him who gave His life so that all might live, was her habitual and not her occasional attitude of mind. But she never paraded her faith, and she rather distrusted those who did. Of an old friend who has now gone over to the world, she said a good many years ago, when he was yet the darling of his comrades: "I am sorry, but I do not like him. He quotes Scripture too glibly."

She did not live in two worlds—that of the flesh and that of the spirit. So, in public affairs, when the minds of many of us were clouded and confused, her sense of right charmed chaos into order. She never could see any difficulty that was not involved in the question of what moral right was. I remember in this connection the somewhat heated barmaids' controversy. Figures as to the number of barmaids had been published by certain writers on the other side, which showed such a



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recklessness or such an ignorance, that she was dumb-founded. With her usual precision she got the various blue books—census returns, etc.—and checked the figures. Then she had to face the question of other employment, but here she soon reached the rock foundations on which her being was built. We only prolong the agony of ill by temporising with evil. Let us face it. The more rigidly that those of us who know the right stand for it, the sooner will the mass of people do it. It was so in everything else. The world of the soul was at war with the world of the flesh, and she was a citizen of the former. She proudly wore its badges, and with cheery resignation put its thorns on her head and its cross on her shoulder.

But she was no sectarian either in name or in nature. That is why she was never very comfortable in an ordinary congregation. She never understood why people had to dress specially in order that they might go to worship. She said that was why the churches were composed of men and women in their separate individuality, and were not the common mind of humanity worshipping. She worshipped, when that act was specialised from her every thought and deed, with her own family at her own fireside, but she often thought of trying to get friends to come for private reading, because she also

## Her Worship

felt the social nature of all true worship. But the days were short and the fields upon which she was scattering good seed were wide, and that desire remained unfulfilled. Besides, on these matters she was very reticent. And so she contented herself by replying to the accusation made by the lady friend of the family : " I am never out of church."

She always enjoyed the simple Presbyterian worship at Lossiemouth, however, and she never missed it. She came to know the folk of the village—some of the fishermen's families very intimately—and going to church with them was a spiritual pleasure to her. She was very anxious that our children should commit to memory the beautiful verses of Scripture, and that their *souls*, and not merely their memories, should know the Gospel story. That is why she was so opposed to having them taught Bible "lessons" in schools. I once said in the House of Commons that the Bible was not a grammar or textbook in mathematics. She came down from the gallery where she was and beamed at me. "They can't get over that argument of yours," she said. "We of the 'secular solution' value the Bible; I don't think the others do—quite in the same way."

When she knew that the end was not far off and that Death was standing by her bed, I asked her if

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she desired to see anyone who would speak to her about what was to come. "That would be but waste of time," she said, "I am ready. Let us speak of what has gone past. God has been very good to me in giving me so much work. The day is ending, and I go to Him for rest and shelter at the close." She was convinced that life and time were not the substance of experience, and she sank into insensibility with praises and gratitude on her lips. She was convinced that she was going upon a journey and that when she ceased to hold my hand she would exchange my clasp for that of those who had gone before her.

## X

OF her personal charm others can write when I dare not. "And you too," wrote Mary Middleton to a friend, "have come under Margaret MacDonald's spell." In nearly every letter written to me by her friends after her death that experience is dwelt upon. She had a wonderful faculty for getting at the hearts of people, and for making the most unpromising human material stand severe tests. She was always discovering people, always encouraging the humble to trust themselves. Were I to begin to quote what her friends of all classes and all degrees of attainment have written about her influence on them, this little tribute to her would swell into a great volume. Two will suffice.

The first was written some years ago by a modest worker in the Women's Labour League. "What a sweet letter you sent! How happy you must be with such delightful children! . . . And now let me say how I shall miss you at the Conference. Indeed, no matter how many other women may

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be there, and no matter how kind and charming women they may be . . . I shall feel quite lonely without you. I would love so to go to London if only to have a talk with you, but I see no way at present." I dare say many girls write such letters to each other. The point about this one is that it was written by one quiet hard-working woman to another. It shows the influence of that lightsome girlishness which never left my wife's mind, which always shone in her face, and which the most weary and worn who came within her circle seemed to catch from her.

The second was written by Mrs. Bode, whose learning and research won for her a deserved place in the Civil Pensions List this year. It appeared in the *Times* a day or two after my wife's death. "Margaret MacDonald has been called a 'champion of women workers,' 'a leader in women's movements,' a 'statesman,' 'la plus charmante femme du monde.' She was certainly these, and certainly also something that not one of these words expresses. She was a woman, who, with a width of mind and a balance of judgment that would have been remarkable in a man, kept to womanhood the fresh joyousness of a girl (her laugh was always a girl's laugh), just as she kept the severe honesty of unspoiled early youth. It was her

## A Tribute

singleness of aim that made her speech at all times, in public and private, transparently simple, her graciousness of manner something that you could never notice as 'manner' at all. Wherever she went she carried an influence that daunted and shamed selfishness, pettiness, and every unworthiness in public life and public work. . . . Perhaps her greatest work was to be what she was. Her freedom from prejudice was as singular in one of her sturdy morality as her spirit of the traveller and citizen of the world together with her gift for motherhood. Her life was a steady and building force. What might she not have accomplished if that life, cut off in its prime, might but have run the whole course—if she had had time to do all that she could have done?"

These are but sprays plucked from a rich garden of sweet fragrance.

It is not given to all men to be genial, hail-fellow-well-met, enthusiastic, and sometimes one comes sadly to the conclusion that unless one can entice the crowd by glittering advertisement of one's wares and sweep it off its feet in a whirlwind of emotion, the crowd will look on indifferently lounging at its own doorsteps. But she won her way by no such flashy arts. Human qualities defy classification and separation into differently labelled

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boxes like the contents of an apothecary's shop. But if I may do a little violence so that I may explain myself, she had conviction rather than enthusiasm ; she picked her way through life guided by the solemn and distant stars not encouraged by flaring bonfires close at hand. Men blessed her because she revealed themselves to themselves. Her power came not from what she did and said, for her doings were of the unassuming genus of drudgery ; she delivered no orations to hot-blooded and apocalyptic-visioned audiences ; she never said much. But she believed in people, and they knew it. Her sense of equality was a kind of forerunner opening out the way to men's hearts for her, and clearing on to the sidepaths the frowning and truculent henchmen of doubt and distrust who would dispute her entrance. Her steadfast passion for human right was rarely the subject of her public utterances. She talked much of wages and hours and conditions of employment, and legislation and administration, but hardly ever of the heaven fires which glowed within her. Two kinds of people she distrusted—those who were always retailing general phrases of the sentimental kind, and those to whose lips texts came readily. Her Dweller in the Innermost was very shy. That it has had such influence upon people is, therefore, one of the most heartening

## Her Gethsemanes

manifestations I have ever known. In this respect, the tributes paid to her have been a refreshing proof that sterling being does count, is seen by sojourners like a welcome light in a dark bewildering night, does draw grateful hearts towards it, is remembered with thankfulness and when it dies enters into the hearts of men as a regenerating and creative power.

And it was the same with her own personal emotions. She complained to me not long before her death that she could not write to me the kind of letters she desired. I have known often that certain experiences were pricking her soul, but she only occasionally spoke of them. She was still more reticent to friends of the outer courts. I always thought of her, when I knew she was worrying, as one standing alone doing penance in the secret silences. She left everyone behind her when she entered her Gethsemanes. If you caught her unawares, she sprang up from her knees, as it were, smiled upon you, and at once led you away on to the grassy slopes where the happy sunbeams were falling.



## XI

For fifteen years we walked through life together, and as we went she became a more and more precious companion, and her greatness and goodness became more and more manifest. For some time past a feeling gripped at my heart that we were not to keep her long. She was evidently failing. She had been much with Death. She had seen loved one after loved one die, and that strange yearning for the dead which is as a bond drawing the living away from the earth came upon her. She faded before our eyes, worn out before her time, weary whilst her years gave promise of many days. Many toils had exhausted her body. She saw the mists of tribulation and vexation coming down to meet us fold upon fold. When it became evident over a year ago that I would have to take up new responsibilities she became sad, and discussed them wearily. She had no doubt that the burdens should be borne; she was proud that they came upon us, yet not as men are proud in vanity, but







1909



## Her Face

as angels are proud in humiliation. She spoke of this on that last day before we parted. "I feel like one who is deserting when the most trying times have come," she said.

And so, remembering all these things, I fear that what I have written may be taken to be but the praise of one who grieves and the love of one who is bereaved. Therefore to these words I have added a few imprints of her face, because I think they will speak of her to those who can read such writings of Destiny, more impartially than I can. •

The earlier one shows the gladsome buoyancy which I knew first, softened by those eyes which, whilst radiating joy, always seemed to be veiled by the sorrows of the world. Then come maturity and maternity, the eyes still seeking the inner sadness of life. Finally, there is the sudden clouding of the impending death even before there is any sign of illness.

We talked much of an evening of rest when others would be toiling in the heat of the day and continuing the work which we began in our morning. On the edge of the moor at Lossiemouth, on a ridge overlooking the sea and commanding wide views of wood and field and distant hill, we built the habitation upon the walls of which we were to hang the swords and spears of our conflicts, and

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where in peace we were to end our days. She was particularly fond of the simple peasant songs of Scotland with their romantic love, gladsome lilt, and domestic felicity. They are standing shelf upon shelf waiting for us, gathered from many bookstalls, and selected from many catalogues. Everything is ready for our homecoming—for that evening of rest. There we were to bid adieu to each other when the time came, and under the shadow of the old grey castle on the hill of Spynie, where my people sleep, we were to be joined through the long night of waiting. But there was no twilight in her day. Noonday suddenly failed in night. Though she is here in every room of the place we built, her step will never again sound within it, and her voice will never again welcome her children to its hearthstones.

I am finishing this little tribute to her in that place, as I began it in the home where we first went together. I have just returned from a walk she loved to take at nightfall. The vast expanse of black sky was glittering with stars as when she and I walked together, and she talked of hope like a gem sparkling upon a background of despair; the sea was moaning as it did when she said "Do not let us speak: let us walk silently, because then we speak most truly;" the weird call of the curlew, flying

## Into the Night

away into the night, came out of the darkness as it did when I first brought her here, and she shuddered and told me it made her wonder, and wonder, and wonder what was in the heart of the Unknown and the Infinite.





ADDRESS BY THE                   •  
REV. W. E. MOLL               •

At the Golder's Green Crematorium,  
12th September, 1911.



As we think of Margaret MacDonald to-day, of what must seem to us the premature end of her useful life, let us strive to balance that thought by the remembrance that He, from whose birth we date our years, and from whom we have learned the beauty of self-sacrifice, and brotherhood, and love, proclaimed from the Cross "It is finished" of a life that was limited to thirty years and three. And well we know that those words are true, not only of His life, but of many a life besides. Life is not to be measured by days and months and years, but by the purpose with which it is lived—it is not the number of days we live, but the spirit in which we live them, that counts. And if ever Horatio Bonar's words were true of any soul that you and I have known, we surely feel that they are true of Margaret MacDonald :—

He liveth long who liveth well.

Grieve though we may, and naturally, for her passing from us, poorer though we must be because bereft of her companionship and sympathy and

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help, yet hers was a life, we all own to-day, lived fully and well, and we are all the better men and women for having been privileged to be associated with her.

We need to prepare to live, far more than we need to prepare to die, and yet death has a lesson to teach us to which, on days like these, it is good for us all to listen. Soon must these restless hearts of ours be stilled, and soon will the generation that follows us be treading over our forgotten graves. "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live." Yes, that is true, life is short, and how humiliating its end! Margaret MacDonald realised that, but she saw that something else was true as well: that life could be transfigured, and the apparent defeat of death reversed by devotion to a high and unselfish ideal, and that ideal she pursued, amid storm and sunshine, from her earliest youth. Self and selfish pleasure and selfish gain, were sternly swept aside; the prizes that worldly men and women live for, with Margaret MacDonald counted for nothing in comparison with the ideal to which her soul was given. Like the great apostle of the nations, she was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision" that she had seen. Like the patriarch of old, she "looked for a city that hath foundations." As she gazed on that

## The City of God

anarchy which goes to make up our life to-day, its injustice, its cruelty, its Paradise for the few, and its Hell for the many, by a supreme act of faith she attained the conviction that another order of society was possible, and devoted her life to the realisation of what her faith had seen. "She looked for a city," an order of society, "that hath foundations" secure and strong—justice, brotherhood, and love—"whose builder and maker is God," indeed, but a God who seeks for the co-operation of men and women in building this Holy City. Let us who share the faith that made Margaret MacDonald's life so full of grace and beauty and dignity, pledge ourselves to go forth to-day and fight again with something of that unselfishness which transfigured every word and deed of hers.

We shall miss her badly in the days to come. The city for which she looked is not yet here. But we believe that it is one day to be, and that when it comes it will be as the old Book says, "the joy of the whole earth." It is for us to give ourselves unselfishly as Margaret MacDonald did to this holy work, to strive and fight with the courage and faithfulness which we revere in her. Though unseen, she will still be with us, watching over our struggles, rejoicing at our successes—it is only in

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seeming, not in reality, that the tie between us and her is broken. As the good old puritan Richard Baxter puts it : "The believing soul frequently ascends, and wanders familiarly through the streets of the Holy City which by faith it seeks and which is yet to be. Visiting the patriarchs and prophets, saluting the apostles, admiring the noble army of the martyrs." And then the good old man adds, and may we each and all take that word with us to-day, "So do thou lead on thy soul till thou bring it to the palace of the great King."

ADDRESS BY THE  
•

REV. F. L. DONALDSON

At St. Mark's Church, Leicester,  
17th September, 1911.





It is written by Saint John, "there was silence in heaven for the space of half-an-hour." The thrilling music stayed; voices angelic ceased, ministries were suspended. Something arrested every sound in heaven. So may it have been when the angels saw the agony in the garden, or when the Crucified yielded up the ghost. For a great sorrow, as a great joy, pleads for silence, not for speech. A sorrow such as this to-day transcends the ministry of words, and the passion and power of song. No words can tell, no music interpret, the immeasurable loss, when Death wrests from us such a life as that of Margaret MacDonald. What shall we say?

Speech is but broken light upon the depth  
Of the unspoken.

Again, so great a sorrow strips us of all pretence. It can only brook reality. Thus it brings us face to face with the Eternal. Deep calleth unto deep. Out of the depth of sorrow we turn towards God as we never did before. We gaze at the Eternal—

## Margaret Ethel MacDonald

the great reality, in whom we live and move and have our being, Who holds 'the keys of Heaven, Hell and Death.

And herein is our sorrow perfected. We fall back on love. If that be true, all else will one day be explained, and fear cast out. This sorrow does. The world, with its ambitions, vanity, and pomp, falls from us. We can almost hear it crumbling into dust. And we are bare of all, save the yearning of our heart and the insight of the spirit. Clearly we perceive, marvelling that we did not see it sooner, that Love alone really matters; that all else is but trivial pretence, and that, because God himself is Love, he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, and dwells in God, and God in him.

Lo! this is the link forged for us by the soul gone from us, the link of love, unbroken and un-breaking. For who can doubt that Margaret MacDonald was one who greatly loved, and, loving, was in union with the love Eternal. "Her sins (for all have sinned) are forgiven, for she loved much." The key-note of her life was Love.

In the sacred circle of her home she loved—husband, children, friends, presenting, before those privileged to see it, the most gracious spectacle on earth—a loyal, steadfast, and devoted

## Her Family Life

wife, crowned with the motherhood that lives by sacrifice of itself, until, losing her own life, she finds it in service and in God.

These are days in which, by all accounts, this witness is sore needed. The old idea of home, on every side is menaced. Commerce, like the legendary vampire, sucks away the rich, warm blood of maiden and of youth, and tears them from the innocence of home. Industrialism, by its ruthless disregard of natural human claim, breaks into the family and demands sacrifice to god of gold, of husband, wife, or child. And so the Age grows poorer, baser, by disruption of the family.

Margaret MacDonald saw this long ago, and bore her witness to its evil, not only by incisive speech and quickened pen, but by exhibiting in herself and in her home the highest possible ideal of sacred family life. None who ever saw her labouring with her husband, or encircled by her children, and tending them in their need, could fail to realise that here at least domestic integrity was safeguarded, and its happiness fulfilled. She leaves behind her images of herself—her children. Her life was of the simplest in its character and habit. She spurned all luxury, and was content. But were she ever challenged as to evidence of her riches, she might, like Cornelia, the noble Roman matron,

## Margaret Ethel MacDonald

have led her children forth, exclaiming, "These are MY jewels!"

Those dear children are now left dreadfully bereft. God grant them grace of friendships sweet and strong, with which to meet this irreparable loss. Yet what a heritage is theirs! For when, as years roll on, they grow in grace and favour, and a thousand lips shall tell them of their mother's work and service, they, "her children, shall rise up and call her blessed."

But beyond the temple of her home, far out in the wide world, Margaret MacDonald went to succour and to save. In early years she gave answer to the call of poor humanity, fallen among thieves, wounded and left by the wayside. And this social service was strengthened by the marriage, some fifteen years ago, to a present chief servant of our city, James Ramsay MacDonald, then one of the Labour pioneers in Britain, and now one of its leading statesmen. Aided, not hindered, in social labour by her marriage, Margaret gave to the cause of the poor and the oppressed her very self, working with heart and head and hand, in season and out of season, for their redemption. It is in this relation that we in Leicester know her best, and here, among all parties, there was unfeigned admiration for her character and life.

## Her Capacity

I do not know a cause for the social uplifting of the people, of which her knowledge was not wide and sound, while in many it was great and deep ; and in the maze and mass of such problems she ranked as a leader and a teacher of the people. We in Leicester stood amazed at her industry, energy, and untiring zeal, and her almost passion for detail, in which, however, she never lost the vision of ideals, or of the final object of the quest. She combined, in rare degree, the faculty of business, with the idealism of a seer, and balanced these twain, in a sure and steady mind and a judgment that rarely erred.

If among great and noble causes any claimed pre-eminence in her mind, they were those of the women and the children. To these, the industrially weak, she gave herself soul and body. She was their organiser and protector, advocate and friend. The cry of the babes entered into her ears, and lingered in her heart, the wail of the downcast sweated, and tortured women of the world quickened her splendid womanhood to energise against those tyrannic forces which oppress the poor.

I have called her "blessed." From many a dreary tenement, from many a fetid slum, from the serried ranks of labour throughout the world, the cry goes up to-day, "she is blessed," and we

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believe our tribute is caught up by the choirs invisible, "yea, she is blessed indeed." Full surely of her it is true, in the words of Saint John, that she has "passed from death unto life, because she loved the brethren."

In this deep reticent affection lay the secret of her religion, which binds her to the very heart of God, for God is love. Inasmuch as she did it unto the least of them, His brethren, she did it unto Him. And now she knows, even as, long ere this, she was known of Him.

Oh! leave her thus; being not so much sorry for our loss, as glad that He gave this life to cheer and help us; not so much sad that she has passed, as full of joy that He has transplanted this sweet life whither it may blossom afresh in the gardens of the blest.

And let us pray for those who mourn her most—her nearest, her dearest, and her best; for her children, that they may perpetuate her memory in the grace and beauty of their lives; for him who loved and loves her best of all, that he may be given consolation, strength, and hope, and communion with her spirit; and for her, that God will grant her rest and peace, and in the world eternal, progress everlasting, and the beatific vision of Himself.





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